

The Benefits of Yoga and Strength Training

There are days when I absolutely, 100% do not feel like moving my body any more than walking downstairs to make a smoothie; however I absolutely, 100% feel better when I do. Whether it's a vinyasa yoga class, a yoga with weights session, or a game of basketball outside with my boys, I have more energy and think clearer after a good sweat session.

I designed the calendar for you to have 3 days on, 1 day off, 2 days on, then 1 day off, so that on average you are physically exercising 5 days a week. If you want to add another session, or are a beginner and need to remove one, then by all means do what makes your body feel good. What I don't want you to do is ever use the excuse that you don't have time. Madonna and Oprah find time to work out everyday, so the rest of us need to re-prioritize our day and to-do's in order to find at least 20 minutes a day to get our heart pumping and build muscle to keep our body healthy, and mind relaxed.

In the goal setting section, there is more information on making exercise a priority, so make sure you read that information also.

Why Xen Strength Yoga With Weights

As you heard me say in the video, I designed this program really for my own needs after I turned 40 and couldn't find a method that combined all the elements of fitness I wanted to incorporate into my workout- in less than an hour.

So I combined a creative yoga flow with light-weights and bodyweight intervals to provide a transformational workout designed to sculpt, lengthen, and challenge every major muscle group- and Xen Strength Yoga with weights was born.

In just one 20 minutes session, you'll build muscle, increases flexibility, and boosts body confidence by bringing you to your edge. You'll get a total-body workout, combining heart-pumping cardio benefits from a nonstop flow with an increased metabolism from added strength training—all in one session. With all of the different postures and sequence options in the videos, I created a completely fresh combination for you every day so you'll never get bored.

Each sequence targets the parts of the body where we hold the most stress: the knees, hips, low back and shoulders. The core is also focused on throughout in order to increase balance, which is one of the most effective ways to correct muscle imbalances in the body.

Want a more scientific explanation of what you're doing? The multi-tasking moves I've created rely on the combination of eccentric and concentric contractions, stretching and strengthening your body, to build muscles that are long, toned, strong and flexible. Plus, they help your muscles recover for your next work-out by improving lymphatic flow to the muscles, which helps remove waste products. When you use weights to build muscle, lactic acid is released, which is a waste product that sits in your muscles and gives you that after burn feeling. Yoga helps to flush out toxins, so you reduce any muscle soreness that would have resulted from your previous training. By stretching muscles as you strengthen them, the yoga postures in the videos will help you to improve the blood and oxygen flow to your muscles, which assists in ridding the body of that excess lactic acid and other toxins.

The Benefits of Yoga and Strength Training

Xen Strength Yoga with weights was carefully designed with the five key training essentials fitness experts recommend:

1. Aerobic Exercise
2. Flexibility
3. Strength Training
4. Core Exercise
5. Balance Training

Aerobic exercise is the foundation of most training programs. It causes you to breathe faster and more deeply, maximizing the amount of oxygen in your blood. As a result, your heart, lungs and blood vessels transport oxygen throughout your body more efficiently. On a daily basis this means physical exercise becomes easier not only as you “workout,” but as you chase your kids down the block, rush to catch your train or climb stairs.

Flexibility is the body’s ability to operate in its full range of motion, and it must be incorporated into daily workouts. A yoga practice not only increases our flexibility, sports performance, mental focus, stress relief, lung capacity, longevity, endurance, and strength; but it also assists in injury prevention. Most aerobic and strength training involves your muscles contracting as they flex; in order to create balance in those muscles we need to lengthen them and increase the range of motion in our joints.

Strength training is recommended by most doctors, as the No. 1 preventive measure against bone loss. It’s advised to engage in some form of strength training at least twice a week to boost metabolism, and keep it running efficiently. Strength training will not only help to maintain healthy bones, raise your metabolism, and build muscle; by adding strength training to your exercise routine you can expect to gain better posture, experience fewer injuries, improve your sports performance and greatly improve your balance. Besides, being strong can make life more fun!

Core exercises are incredibly beneficial. By training all of the abdominal muscles, the transverse abdominis, rectus abdominis, and the obliques, we help support all of our abdominal structure including our lower back. Core exercises can improve balance and coordination, stabilize the lower back, increase flexibility, improve respiration and lung capacity and give you that envious flat belly.

Balance training improves the communication between your brain and muscles. While enhancing your neuromuscular coordination you are also burning more calories. During balance training your body has to work hard to isolate and engage specific muscles to maintain stabilization. Balance training improves coordination, athletic skill and posture.

Functional fitness has been a buzzword on the gym floor for a few years, and for good reason We need to apply the strength, mobility, flexibility and balance we gain from our exercise to our daily life activities. “Functional exercises” involve multiple planes and multiple joints. Exercises that combine upper and lower-body movements, require lifting and twisting at the same time, and incorporate balancing while moving will inherently improve flexibility, enhance core stabilizer muscles, improve range of motion and stability in everyday life. Xen Strength Yoga with weights uses functional exercise techniques to give you the ability to do everything you need to do in your daily life without pain—it’s exercising to improve the way your body works...and looks!

The Benefits of Yoga and Strength Training

Major studies have shown that 30 minutes of functional fitness exercises can be just as effective at burning fat and even more efficient than 60 minutes of moderate cardio exercise.

Why Add Strength Training to Yoga?

Yoga tones muscles all over your body, in balance with each other. It relies heavily on eccentric contraction, where the muscle stretches as it contracts, giving the muscles that sleek, elongated look while increasing flexibility in the muscles and joints. Weight training mostly relies on the opposite physical principle of concentric muscle contraction, which means the muscle gets smaller as it contracts. Combining yoga with weight training creates muscles that are strong, long and lean.

Combining warrior three with a tricep kickback kills two birds with one stone and saves time- doing over 25 of these combined moves in a sequence completely tones every muscle, while keeping your heart rate up throughout the flow and intervals.

Muscle is metabolically active tissue that requires energy to maintain 24/7. Weight training leads to protein synthesis, which leads to larger total muscle mass, which leads to an increase in your long-term metabolic rate; yes, that's a good thing!

#1 You'll lose body fat

Research has shown that the average woman who strength trains two to three times a week for two months, will gain nearly two pounds of muscle and will lose 3.5 pounds of fat; according to Wayne Westcott, PhD from the YMCA,

The great thing is, that as your lean muscle increases, so does your resting metabolism, which means you burn more calories all day long. On average, for each pound of muscle you gain, you burn 35-50 more calories each day.... And yes, it really does add up!

#2 You'll gain strength

Whether you're a construction worker, or just lifting a laundry basket up and down the stairs, increased strength can help you move about your day with less assistance from machines or other people.

Depending on what level you start, you'll be able to improve your strength by 30-50% by training even two days a week. Researchers also found that women don't usually get bigger from strength training, because they have 10 to 30 times less of the hormones that cause muscle hypertrophy- but don't worry, that doesn't mean you're going to get big and bulky- just toned and defined.

#3 You'll decrease your risk of osteoporosis

Listen up ladies: Working with weights can increase the mineral bone density of your spine, and enhance bone modeling by 13% in just six months; according to research, And yes, men can also benefit from keeping their bone density at optimal levels.

#4 You'll improve your athletic performance

You don't have to be an athlete to care about this- you might just be chasing your kids around the playground. Either way, research has proven that strength training improves athletic ability and decreases your risk of injury whether you're a golfer, tennis player, football player, or a cyclist.

#5 You'll reduce your risk of Injury, Back Pain, and Arthritis

Strength training not only builds stronger muscles, but it also helps stabilize the joints by strengthening the connective tissue surrounding them. One 12-year study has shown that strengthening the low-back muscles had an 80% success rate in eliminating or alleviating low back pain.

#7 You'll reduce your risk of heart disease and Diabetes

Weight training can improve your cardiovascular health in several ways, including lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol, increasing HDL (good) cholesterol, and lowering blood pressure, according to Dr. Barry A. Franklin, of William Beaumont Hospital in Michigan. He also discovered that weight training may improve the way the body processes sugar, which may reduce the risk of diabetes.

*When cardiovascular exercise is added, the benefits are maximized- precisely why we keep moving to elevate our heart rate in each Xen Strength sequence.

#8 Improve your mood and fight depression

Those smarties at Harvard found that just 10 weeks of working with weights reduced clinical depression symptoms more successfully than standard counseling did. People who strength train report feeling more confident and capable as a result of their workouts. #WINNING!

Your New Fitness Mantra

Now that you have all the reasons WHY you should move that body of yours, make sure you read all of the goal setting tips on how to incorporate the physical part of this program into your daily life. You may have heard me say this before, but I'll say it again; if you're ever on the fence as to whether you should stay in bed or press play on a video, or sit on the couch and watch TV or crank out a quick 20 minute video, ask yourself this: "One hour from now, do I want to be sweaty, or sorry?" I've never NOT felt better after any workout, I doubt you will either.